

## CONCEPT 1: NATURAL RESOURCES — THE HEART OF THE DELTA

### GOAL

The goal of this concept is to awaken in visitors and residents alike the awe and wonder of the magnitude, importance, and diversity of the natural systems that make up the Delta. The natural systems that have changed over time have been the reason that so many generations of people have called the Delta home.

### IMPORTANCE/SIGNIFICANCE

The Mississippi River is the core of the Delta. Indeed, it is unquestionably significant to the North American continent. As a flyway, the river becomes a rest stop and feeding ground to over 20% of the nation's migrating duck populations. One of the most diverse fisheries in the world is supported by the Mississippi River and its tributaries. The Delta is world renown for its catfish production, and what would a visit to Louisiana be without crawfish?

Wildlife habitats throughout the Delta support whitetail deer, muskrats, racoons, and the river otter among others. The forests and backwater pools found along the river are home to a number of endangered species, including bald eagle, peregrine falcon, Higgins eye mussel, fat pocketbook mussel, palid sturgeon, Blandings, turtle, Massassaugua rattlesnake, relict darter, and the Louisiana black bear.

Habitat protection and restoration along with the newest ecosystem management practices are visible at wildlife refuges and national forests throughout the Delta study area. The

refuge system provides resting spaces for millions of migratory birds along their migration routes. They also ensure the survival of many animal species, ranging from bald eagles to black ducks to river otters. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with the Corps of Engineers, has restoration projects underway the length of the river. The largest single landowner along the lower river, Anderson Tully, has a long history of effective wildlife management.

Vegetative communities along the river represent a bisection of many the vegetative communities found throughout the central United States. These communities include oak bottomland forests, cypress bayous, and brackish tidal wetlands.

Numerous animal and bird species depend on the diverse habitats of the river corridor for survival. Humans, in turn, depend on the health of these animal populations as they are used for food and contribute to the economic prosperity of the region. Without question, the entire nation depends on the health of the natural systems of the Mississippi River.

### RESOURCES

Resources to be used for this concept include national natural landmarks, wildlife refuges, national forests, NPS units, and state recreation areas. These resources illustrate the diversity of the natural systems as well as educate visitors and residents to the importance of preserving them for future generations.

## **RESOURCES**

### **NATIONAL NATURAL LANDMARKS**

1. Horseshoe Lake Natural Preserve (Alexander County, Illinois)
2. Little Grand Canyon Area (Jackson County, Illinois)
3. Giant City Geologic Area (Union County, Illinois)
4. Henderson Sloughs (Northeast of Uniontown, Kentucky)
5. Big Oak Tree (Mississippi County, Missouri)
6. Pickle Springs (St. Genevieve County, Missouri)
7. Reelfoot Lake (Lake County, Tennessee)
8. Big Lake Natural Area (Mississippi County, Arkansas)
9. Green Ash - Overcup Oak - Sweetgum Research Natural Area (Sharkey County, Mississippi)
38. Mississippi Petrified Forest (Flora, Mississippi)

### **NATIONAL FORESTS**

10. Mark Twain National Forest (Arkansas)
11. Shawnee National Forest (Illinois)
12. Ozark National Forest (Arkansas)
13. Kisatchie National Forest (Louisiana)
14. Holly Springs National Forest (Mississippi)
15. Tombigbee National Forest (Mississippi)
16. Bienville National Forest (Mississippi)
17. DeSoto National Forest (Mississippi)
18. Homochitto National Forest (Mississippi)
19. Delta National Forest (Mississippi)
36. Ouachita National Forest (Arkansas)

### **NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES**

21. Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge (Mississippi)
22. Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge (Mississippi)
23. Panther Swamp National Wildlife Refuge (Mississippi)
24. Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge (Illinois)
25. Mingo Refuge (Missouri)
26. White River National Wildlife Refuge (Arkansas)
27. Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuge (Arkansas)

28. Big Lake National Wildlife Refuge (Arkansas)
29. Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge (Arkansas)
30. Tensas River National Refuge (Louisiana)
31. Lake Ophelia National Refuge (Louisiana)
32. Cameron Prairie National Refuge (Louisiana)
33. Red Dirt National Refuge (Louisiana)
34. Upper Ouachita National Refuge (Louisiana)
35. Catahoula National Refuge (Louisiana)
37. Delta National Wildlife Refuge (Louisiana)

### **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE UNITS**

20. Gulf Islands National Seashore (Ocean Springs, Mississippi)
39. Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve:Barataria (New Orleans, Louisiana)
40. Arkansas Post National Memorial (Gillett, Arkansas)
41. Buffalo National River (Harrison, Arkansas)
42. Hot Springs National Park

### **STATE RECREATION AREAS**

State Recreation Areas are scattered throughout the study Lower Mississippi Delta and offer residents and visitors opportunities to view and enjoy the wonders of the region's natural resources.

